

QUEENSLAND'S ACHIEVEMENT

By the Hon. H. F. HARDACRE

(From an address to the Queensland Henry George League)

I will now state briefly some of the measures based on Henry George's principles which have been adopted in Queensland to its great benefit since the publication of *Progress and Poverty*. That great book was published in 1879. It was printed as a serial by the Brisbane *Courier* through its columns in 1883. Its influence was immediately manifested.

At that time there was in existence a Government, led by Sir S. W. Griffiths, and with a Minister for Lands, the Hon. C. B. Dutton, who had large pastoral interests. In the following year that Government passed what is known as the Crown Lands Act of 1884, under which almost the whole of the country lands of Queensland were put under Crown Leases based on rentals to be paid to the Government on Henry George's principles—the rents to be re-assessed at stated periods.

Prior to that great Act it had been the common practice of previous Governments to sell at auction immense areas at such low prices as 10s. per acre, giving freehold for all time. In that way very often what was colloquially termed "the eyes," in reality the picked portions of districts, were picked out and monopolised. The Crown Lands Act of 1884 soon ended such evil conditions and instituted the Georgian better principle of retaining at moderate rentals to tenants a growing revenue to the Crown over a considerable portion of Queensland.

Queensland was fortunate a few years later in obtaining another great legislative measure based on Georgian principles in the Valuation and Rating Act of 1890, obtaining rate revenue solely from the valuation of land. This was influenced directly by a visit to Queensland of Henry George himself. He arrived in Brisbane on a lecturing tour in 1890.

RATES ONLY ON THE VALUE OF LAND

At this time there was in Parliament a young man, the Hon. W. Stephen, as member for South Brisbane, who took an interest in George's lectures. He succeeded in obtaining in a new Rating Measure shortly afterwards in Parliament, the omission of rating improvements and imposing rates only on the value of land.

This was the first measure of its kind in the world and has since been followed by a similar measure in N.S.W., parts of N.Z., and some of the cities in U.S.A.

A still further measure of Georgian principles was introduced 15 years later by the first Queensland Labour Government with the Hon. T. J. Ryan as its Premier, and in its Ministry the Hon. H. F. Hardacre, who was the chief influence in having a Revenue Act passed, imposing taxation on the unimproved value of land in 1915. The then Treasurer at first proposed to balance revenue and expenditure by continuing retrenchment imposed by the previous Government on the salaries and wages of its employees. I succeeded instead of obtaining the required revenue by omitting the retrenchment and introducing taxation in substitution therefor upon the value of land. It has been in operation ever since and followed in principle by some of the other States in Australia.

AN UNDEVELOPED LAND TAX

An even greater measure of Georgian principles was adopted by the same Labour Government instigated to that effect also by the Hon. H. F. Hardacre—and which may truthfully be said to be his own proposal. This was a special Undeveloped Land Value Tax.

This is a special measure of original form not in existence, it is believed, in any other country in the world. Though not being in full accordance with Georgian principles, it has meritorious features that make it deserving of adoption everywhere. The taxation is upon the value of the land, but only upon such land as has not upon it improvements equal to a fourth of the value of the land.

The foregoing several measures of adoption of Georgian principles places Queensland as leader in the practice of the doctrines of Henry George in advance of all other countries. And it may be for this reason that we are stated not to have felt the prevailing world-wide depression as severely as in many other places, and that we are amongst the first to feel the effects of returning prosperity.

Certain at least it is that in Queensland has been laid the foundations of a better system of taxation than in almost every other country. It is true, alas, that we have not yet removed all obnoxious and destructive taxation. And also unfortunately we are subject to the numerous evil forms of taxation imposed by the Commonwealth Parliament. But the right way of advance that has been provided for others after us to follow which, being adopted, would usher in for us the ideal progress and prosperity of a higher civilization which Henry George has visioned for us as possible.

BRITISH WEST AFRICA

"A HAPPY PEOPLE"

In two articles in the *Manchester Guardian* (7th and 8th January) Mr Charles Roden Buxton has given an interesting account of a recent visit to West Africa. He contrasts the prosperity and contentment of the people with the conditions in East and South Africa.

"This happy people, this prosperous peasant economy, this underlying contentedness in spite of repeated wars in quite recent years—this marvellous Civil Service, whose mind and heart can be devoted wholly to the people's welfare without the pull of conflicting 'White' interests—why are such things so little known in our African dependencies elsewhere? For I could not doubt that the sum of human happiness was far greater here than in Kenya—incomparably greater than in South Africa.

"The smiling faces, the women pouring in with their own produce on their heads to the busy little markets which are to be seen wherever the tiniest group of houses is gathered together; the superior quality of the houses which I visited; the gay gatherings of the people when I was 'received' by chiefs and councillors—all helped to remind me of the difference.

"True, there was much lamenting over the slump in the export of palm oil; but I could see no signs of impoverishment, nor did the statistics reveal any decline of public health or of population. The people, it seemed, could still live tolerably, at any rate, on their little patches of land.

"Can it be, I asked myself, that these people in West Africa are so superior in social development and intelligence as to justify such a striking difference in our way of treating them? I could not see it.

"I concluded that it was unnecessary to seek for far-fetched reasons; the explanation lies on the surface. It is to be found in the land question. East and South Africa contain large areas which are habitable by white people; consequently, large areas were taken from the native population, a large proportion of whom have become labourers or squatters, removed from their own tribes and their own homes, a drifting mass of landless